

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 ACDA-05 MC-02 SAM-01 /088 W

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R 101545Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7220

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 14067

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON'S CATHOLIC PRELATES DISCUSS CHRISTIAN POSITION

1. LEADERS OF MARONITE AND OTHER CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN ELBANON HELD MEETING NOV 7 AT MARONITE PATRIARCH'S RESIDENCE IN BKERKE. MEETING WAS FOLLOW-UP TO MESSAGE FROM POPE TO PRES FRANGIE LAST WEEK EXPRESSING ANXIETY ABOUT LEBANON'S FORMULA OF INTERCOMMUNAL COEXISTENCE AND URGING END TO FIGHTING. OBVIOUSLY MEETING ALSO INTENDED AS PREPARATION FOR CARDINAL BERTOLI'S VISIT AS PAPAL EMISSARY. (BERTOLI ARRIVED NOV 9.) A PARTICIPANT TOLD EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE LATER THAT MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION WERE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) PARTICIPANTS AGREED THAT LEBANON SHOULD RETAIN PRESIDENCY FOR MARONITE AND THE CURRENT SIX-FIVE RATION OF CHRISTIANS OVER MOSLEMS IN PARLIAMENT. RATIONALE FOR SIX-VIE RATION WAS, FIRST, THAT CABINET AND ADMINISTRATION HAVE EVOLVED TO FIFTY-FIFTY SPLIT GIVING MSOLEMS ALL THEY NEED AND, SECOND, THAT CHRISTIAN EDGE IS NEEDED IN LEGISLATURE TO OVERCOME ANY FUTURE MOVVES TOWARD UNION WITH SYRIA. (COMMENT: APPARENTLY

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PARTICIPANTS DIDN'T CONSIDER THAT FIFTY-FIFTY SPLIT IN CABINET

AND ADMINISTRATION IS AS MUCH AN ARGUMENT FOR HAVING SAME RATION IN LEGISLATURE AS IT IS AN ARGUMENT AGAINST. THEIR FEAR OF FUTURE EFFORTS TO UNITE WITH SYRIA REPORTEDLY INCLUDED BELIEF THAT SOME CHRISTIANS MIGHT VOTE WITH MOSLEMS AND THUS EXTRA MARGIN NEEDED.)

(B) MARONITE PATRIARCH SPOKE OUT STRONGLY ON THE PARTITION

OF LEBANON. THE OTHERS AGREED WITH HIM BUT HEDGED IN THEIR COMMENTS, INDICATING THEIR COMMITMENT TO COUNTRY'S TERRITORIAL UNITY WAS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN HIS.

(C) GREEK CATHOLIC PATRIARCH HAKIM BRIEFED PARTICIPANTS ON RECENT TALK WITH AMBASSADOR GODLEY.

HAKIM SAID AMBASSADOR HAD NOT BEEN ENCOURAGING ON US SUPPORT FOR LEBANON (READ LEBANESE CHRISTIANS). OTHER PARTICIPANTS REPLIED THAT THEIR SOUNDINGS OF US EMBASSY ATTITUDES HAD BROUGHT THEM TO SAME CONCLUSION. (COMMENT: THE MESSAGE MAY BE GETTING THROUGH THAT THE USG DOES NOT EQUATE LEBANON WITH PRIVILEGED POSITION FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.)

2. PUBLIC STATEMENT ISSUED AFTER MEETING AVOIDED ABOVE POINTS EXCEPT IN GENERALITIES. IT STRESSED NECESSITY FOR FIGHTING TO END AND DIALOGUE TO RESUME AMONG COUNTRY'S COMMUNITIES. IT ADDED THAT STATE SHOULD EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER ALL ELEMENTS TO STOP INFLOW OF ARMS FROM EVERY SOURCE AND TO EVERY DESTINATION. THE STATEMENT ALSO URGED THE GOVT TO DEVOTE ITSELF TO OVERCOMING THE ECONOMIC DISASTER THAT EXISTS IN THE WAKE OF THE FIGHTING. GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CHRISTIANS, POLICIES, PARTITION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT14067
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750390-1015
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751160/aaaacbpj.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAY 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <17 OCT 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON'S CATHOLIC PRELATES DISCUSS CHRISTIAN POSITION
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006